David Pleasance on why the Amiga's mascot is still missing in action

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

Amiga Format regularly played host to an illuminating Q&A segment between we, the end-users, and Commodore's distant upper echelons as an exercise in bridging the chasm.

Managing director of the UK branch, David Pleasance, lent his amiable face to the cause, and in issue 63 (September 1994) tackled a question most of us have pondered at some point or another over the years; why did the Amiga never have an official representative to counter Nintendo's Mario and SEGA's Sonic?

The man at the top

I have always noticed something missing from the Amiga compared to Nintendos and SEGAs. What I'm talking about is a mascot such as Mario or Sonic - something to identify with. 3DO has not been very successful, the same is true of the Jaguar, and the Amiga (CD32 in particular) will go the same way unless something is done.

I know Commodore don't program games, but why not pay, or buy out, a company such as Gremlin to make a character and game for you, which Commodore would hold the copyright to.

Commodore need to be purchased soon, surely a character such as this would make it a much more attractive proposition to buy out? The character wouldn't have to be a lovable cute one - it could be a well hard dinosaur or a swamp monster. You may think this approach of a mascot-type character is out-dated,

but it sells machines and that is what Commodore desperately need to do.

Nick Donnelly, Ely, Cambs

This is a topic that has often been raised in the past, but it is worth airing again. Firstly can I assure you that we have been offered on an exclusive basis, wonderful characters such as Zool from Gremlin. However, there are a number of reasons why we haven't, thus far, chosen to follow this route.

Commodore pioneered the initiative of bundles, creating packs which include the latest and best in gaming software, thereby ensuring that purchasers always get free what they would certainly buy anyway. This precludes us from tying ourselves to a character over a long period of time, which would undoubtedly become out of fashion. Also, it is important to remember that Commodore is not a software publisher, and therefore does not make the same massive profits as the Japanese console manufacturers do with their Sonics and Marios. The 8 and 16-bit console market is in a terrible state of affairs with business forecast to drop over 50 per cent this year - so where is the help from Sonic and Mario now?

Personally I think this would have pigeon-holed the system solely as a gaming platform; an approach clearly antithetical to Commodore's long-term goal of pitching the Amiga as a versatile multimedia system with much to offer to business people, programmers, artists, musicians and so on.

Plus, how would you have sold your parents on the idea of investing in a homework facilitator if it had Superfrog's gurning mug plastered all over it?

Nintendo and SEGA from the outset intended to milk the teats off their respective cash cows, and to make that feasible they'd have to keep the franchises fresh with regular, revamped releases. They'd be in a prime position to let their imagination run riot because, as David says, they owned the hardware, the software, the intellectual property, the whole kit and caboodle.

Analogously, on the Amiga side, any chosen mascot would have to form the basis of an ongoing series, not a one-off game, and be exclusive to the platform. So what would that whittle our options down to? The longest-running franchise at the time was probably Codemaster's Dizzy, but then their anthropomorphic egg on legs also appeared on the Mega Drive, in addition to myriad 8-bit systems beforehand, so that counts *him* out.

An alternative route might have been to choose a *non-gaming* character who was already synonymous with the Amiga, and wouldn't become stale as the technology advanced. A popular suggestion is Eric W. Schwartz's Amy the Squirrel... a topless femme-fatale who starred in an array of risque animated shorts in which she would variously be chased or drooled over by her lascivious co-stars. Ah...